

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

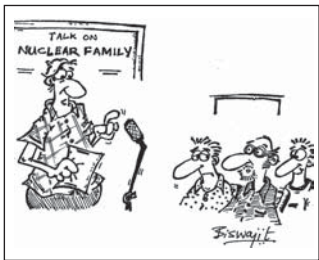
MUSINGS

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Sir, your question is on nuclear bomb. I would appreciate if you could restrict your question to my talk on Nuclear Family?

A Question of Questions

The Speaker's concluded his speech.

The person-in-charge-of-keeping-things-moving turns to the audience with the winning, yet anxious, smile of a loving mother unsure of her brood's possible behaviour, and declares the 'floor open for questions'.

Which immediately leads to that initial ghastly silence, followed by more proof that people usually fit into categories.

Like: The Question-ers, and, in sharp contrast, the Shrinking Violets.

The former are indefatigable.

Any topic, any time.

Even a talk on the philosophy of toothpicks won't defeat them.

And you admire their participative spirit ... yes.

But ...

Some Question-ers sometimes get words like 'Question', 'Speech', and 'Oratory' a tad mixed up.

Certain misguided souls dare to settle cosily into one-on-one dialogues with the Speaker, while some lengthy questions suggest that this Question-er was probably one of those brooding, pimply wall flowers in high school everyone ignored.

Understandable then, this present-day garrulousness, but, hey, cleansing old trauma at the cost of a blameless, current audience?

Little unfair, perhaps?

Still, it's great for the Speaker to see the Question-ers. The alternative – a sea of sullen, silent faces glowering unblinkingly at you – is too horrid.

So if the question is: To ask or not to ask, do choose 'ask'... but exercise caution.

Ranjitha Ashok

Please, can the Library stay where it now is?

(By The Editor)

The politics of one regime's meat being the other's poison continues unabated in our State. The latest to face the heat is the Anna Centenary Library in Kotturpuram, one of the pet projects of the previous government. It has been announced that this will be converted into a super-speciality hospital for children. At this rate, what is likely to be the fate of other projects of the previous government, like the poongas?

Meanwhile, the State Government would do well to reconsider its decision, after taking into account not only the logistics and cost involved in such an action as well as the fact that a purpose-built building cannot easily be converted for a totally different purpose, but also the sentiments of litterateurs, scholars and book-lovers not only from within Tamil Nadu but all across the world. It might also take into consideration the fact that it's in the heart of the city's major educational hub and, being there, will serve better IIT-Madras, Anna University's colleges, the CLRI and various research institutes, polytechnics and schools.

The Library, built at a cost of Rs. 172 crore, was declared open last year. It houses five lakh books, with as many due to be added and is at present attracting around 1500 visitors every day. Modelled on the National Library of Singapore, it has received praise from all quarters and is considered a worthy addition to a city that has prided itself on being a knowledge capital.

The idea of a second hospital in the city (after the Institute of Child Health) for children is most welcome. But can it not be at a green-field location? Why does it have to be in place of the library? Let's face it. Transforming into a hospital a building custom-made to house

a library will be no easy task. It is going to involve huge expenditure in a complete transformation of the interiors. Newspaper estimates put the figure at Rs. 100 crore, which is more than 50 per cent of the cost incurred in putting up the library. And even then the final results are not going to be as satisfactory as a freshly planned and executed hospital would be. The only saving would be in the cost of construction of the shell, for that is all that would remain

(Continued on page 2)



Signs of the changing times!

– A name change for Kalaignar Maaligai...
– What awaits the poongas?

The drama of sealing illegal constructions

After years and years of Adithering, the Government has finally cracked down on several high profile shopping establishments in T'Nagar, all of which had been merrily carrying on trade in buildings that had become a byword for exceeding sanctioned area limits. The question is, why was the Government, no matter which party was in power, silent for so long? And why did several steps taken by the Government actually strengthen the hands of those committing the violations?

In its time, T'Nagar was the first properly planned district of

A case of too little, too late

the city, in the modern sense of planning. And yet, Theyaga-roya Nagar or T'Nagar, the showpiece of Madras in the 1920s, is today a classic example of how faulty planning, poor implementation of building regulations, the real-estate-builder-government nexus and

rampant exploitation of land with no concern for anything else, can create an urban disaster. The area has become notorious for its ambient air having the highest particulate matter, far beyond what is permissible. The congestion caused by illegal highrises was never questioned by those who had the authority to check it. These structures were never inspected while work on construction was in progress and their violations were never considered worthy of demolition. While the businesses flourished, the area went

• by A Special Correspondent

(Continued on page 7)

Business notes by

S. VISWANATHAN

Editor, *Industrial Economist*

When Hyundai won the race

On January 1, 1996, Ford Motor Company announced during a function its plan to set up a car manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu. It set a target to release the first car in October 1998.

A team of senior managers from South Korea attended this glittering function at the Taj Coromandel, Chennai, and were seen keenly taking notes on Ford's plans.

Hyundai also got all the handsome concessions offered by the Jayalalithaa government to Ford Motors to attract mega investment into Tamil Nadu. Hyundai displayed its small car Santro at the Auto Expo in New Delhi held in January 1996. Commencing work by mid-1996, the Koreans raced with the construction of the plant at Irungattukottai on the National Highway to Bangalore, and released the first Santro around Deepavali 1998 – the target originally set by Ford! The Santro was an instant success.

Today, Hyundai has emerged the second largest manufacturer of cars in India

with a production of around 600,000 cars; over a third of these are exported.

Ford, unfortunately, missed out in the initial years, starting as it did with the Escort, produced jointly with the Mahindras at Nashik. Ford, at that time, did not have a small car to take on Maruti. Its original plan was delayed by a year and it came out with the Ikon by end-1999. By this time, Hyundai's Santro was well-established. Of course, Maruti continued to lead – and still does. But it has since recently been beset with industrial unrest in Gurgaon. This perhaps explains why the company which introduced the high technology passenger car at a modest price in India in 1983, is not active in the present competition for market space by several multinationals. Its most famous product, Maruti 800, has been phased out. Its Alto has been quite popular both in India and Europe. But when better days are there on the labour front, we can expect this leader to come out with new products in quick time. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

Let the Library stay

(Continued from page 1)

if the Library is to be stripped and remodelled into a hospital.

The location is also worthy of reconsideration. The library is ideally situated, in the middle of an educational precinct. Would a hospital with all its adjuncts not vitiate this atmosphere of education?

The Government has also announced that it proposes to build another Anna Library, to house the present collection, at the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) campus. This will affect several heritage structures. The main building, the Madras Literary Society, a building that dates to the era of the College of Fort St. George, and the two arched gateways (one on College Road and the other, more magnificent one, rarely noticed, but facing the Coom) are just a few. The main building is undergoing restoration while the MLS has just been renovated. Are these structures now capable of bearing the stress of modern high-rise construction in their neighbourhood? Or, worse, will they be pulled down, as word on the street has it?

In addition, the campus is a green lung, with several old trees. The previous Government in constructing the now-abandoned New Assembly-cum-Secretariat Complex on Mount Road had razed several heritage structures and denuded the area of its tree cover. Does the present regime want to be remembered for a similar record?

The decision to abandon the Assembly on Mount Road met with mixed reactions. Not everyone was impressed with its architecture. And the idea of power being centred at Fort St. George appealed to those with a sense of history. On the other hand, the plan to relocate the Anna Library for no valid reason is already seeing a groundswell of public opinion against the move. The State Government hopefully should read the direction of the wind and let the library stay where it is. Certainly Anna the Scholar would not want a library to be made a non-library, especially by a Government headed by a party bearing his name.

(Also see page 5)

Ne'er the twain shall meet

The Man from Madras Musings, like *Portia*, thinks that there is music in the heavens. After all, December is just around the corner and those running the *sabhas* must be limbering their muscles even as the musicians clear their throats. It was rather appropriate then that a foreign country that is celebrating a certain number of years of association of its music programme with ours (MMM forgets the exact number) chose to have an orchestra from back home to perform a few Western classical pieces. Now, that is a form of music that MMM loves, but very regrettably he understands very little of it.

The programme outdid MMM's expectations, but as the event progressed, what impressed MMM even more was the audience behaviour. 'Exemplary' would have been an understatement. Not a single cell-phone rang, not a throat was cleared repeatedly, no rustle of newspapers, no steady chomp-chomp of food being surreptitiously eaten, no crackle of plastic covers and, above all, no steady drone of conversation. It was amazing. The programme was only for an hour and a half and yet nobody got up in between to shuffle to the toilets. And when the clock struck eight, the general exodus, in answer to the call of the TV serial, was also absent. What exactly had contributed to this sudden adoption of best behavioural practices?

But that this was no permanent change was made amply clear the very next time that MMM attended an Indian music concert at the same venue, just a few days later. The same faces were in attendance for, after all, the art-loving population of the city is small and, to quote from the newspapers, "All the usual suspects were present." And as though to make up for what had been missed in the earlier event, the nuisance value was at its highest. The mikes, which had behaved themselves in the previous instance, chose to let out sudden shrieks. The sound-man, who was servile in the extreme to the performers from abroad, was truculent in his response. And the audience resorted to all its usual misdemeanours. Yet, the artiste performed with a serene smile right through, even when half the hall upped and left, rather like Cinderella, when the clock struck the happy hour. Had he been in the artiste's place, MMM would have considered hurling at least a loud rebuke or two at their retreating backs.

What exactly contributes to this behavioural swing? According to a senior industrialist with whom MMM discussed the matter, this is

not much different from our kinsmen refraining from spitting or littering when they go abroad, only to come back and resume their usual (bad) practices.

Mega releases

Before you assume that the Bheading refers to something from the film world, *The Man from Madras Musings* would like to inform you that he rarely watches films. No, this has to do with an audio CD release, which was accompanied by as much fanfare as a film premiere. Star-studded is the only word. A few years ago, a CD release was a simple matter. You saw an advertisement in the paper and went and bought the recorded music from the nearest outlet. Now you need special events for each of these releases, even though this silicon disc is fast fading away, being replaced by other and better media options.

But to get back to the audio release. Taking a leaf from cricket events, where the prize cheque is blown up several times and gifted to the winner in a size more akin to a vast outdoor hoarding, the event

the other door which was then held open by another dignitary on the "dias" (as it is often called in our city). By then the audience was tittering gently, for such being the size of the doors, everyone barring the Chief Guest was completely hidden behind the container. The photographers were clamouring for them to come out but who could leave this huge container to stand on its own?

The Chief Guest then decided to go "back stage", so to speak, by which MMM means the container. He had, no doubt, wanted to lend a helping hand but the net result was that everyone had vanished behind the CD rack and all that you could detect of any human presence on the stage was that of a few finger tips, desperately clutching the container and hoping it would not topple over. It was almost as though a CD had decided to launch itself and was in the process of doing so, sans any human assistance. Being rather close to the stage, MMM could hear embarrassed whispers among those covered by the monstrous CD case and evidently a heated debate was in progress as to who should be the first to emerge from behind. Everyone wanted to leave simultaneously, but the container lurched alarmingly to one side, forcing all the guests to support it once more.

Matters appeared to have reached an impasse when the burly individuals who had brought the rack on to the stage decided to help and took over. Order was restored and the sheepish dignitaries emerged into the spotlight once more. The photographers became busy, those on stage beamed (no doubt with relief), and the audience duly clapped. 'Thunderous applause' would be a better description, no doubt, as they were expressing their appreciation for having been provided extra entertainment.

Evidently what is right for cricket is not appropriate for Carnatic music.

The fortnight's picture

What does this shop sell, *The Man from Madras Musings* would like to know. You would not be far wrong in deducing that MMM is flummoxed.

– MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

managers evidently decided that something akin to this must be done in the present instance too. And, so, when the time came for the release of the CD, what should MMM see but that a huge container, at least five feet by four feet was brought on to stage by a couple of burly individuals and handed over to the Chief Guest who, being of venerable age, staggered under the load. The other guests on stage, along with the artiste whose work was being released, had to rally round to support him and the container, which threatened to topple over and flatten all of them in one shot.

Once everyone had attained some semblance of balance, the Chief Guest made ready to open the container, which was fitted with two doors like a cupboard. He managed to open one, which was then held open by one of the other guests, and next he went across to open



OUR READERS WRITE



Operating at home

M. Harinarayanan's article 'And so English came to Madras' (MM, November 1st) provided nostalgic reading.

V.S. Srinivasa Sastri was also a member of the Servants of India Society. Whatever happened to this band of patriots?

Sir T. Rangachari, the well known surgeon (a statue of him used to be in Park Town, close to the famous Ramakrishna Lunch Home) was a tireless worker who did a lot of free work for the poor. His yellow Rolls Royce could be seen parked in many a slum area, where he would carry out surgical procedures in the homes of his patients.

My father used to tell us of how Dr. Rangachari carried out a hernia operation on my grandfather on the table in the front hall! They lived in Tondiarpet then in a house called *Vemoor Villa*.

Dr. Dorasami Raman

Fuerteventura, Canary Islands

Using Webster

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (MM, November 1st) swore by Webster's and not by any other dictionary. During the war-time evacuation of Madras, he moved to Coimbatore where his son V.S. Sankaran was the Postmaster (later to become PMG). Every Saturday afternoon he used to conduct pronunciation classes for teachers and others interested in English.

My father, a close friend of his, used to attend the classes and would take me with him. I was a student of II Form.

Sastri gave me an assignment. As soon as he wrote a word on the blackboard, I had to locate it in Webster's and place the dictionary on the table, with the particular page open that contained the word. He would read out the word with proper intonation and stress, and ask the participants to say it in chorus. Sometimes he would explain the origin of the word, its historical relevance etc. The time he allotted me to search the dictionary was just 30 seconds for a word.

That exercise stayed me in good stead when I became a teacher. I permitted the students in my school to bring the dictionary to examination hall to refer to words.

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Disappointment

I fully endorse the feelings of R.V. Rajan as expressed in 'A Sad Split into Two' (MM, November 1st).

I am not interested in the domestic reasons behind the split. But the split has led to a race to open as many branches as possible. Viewed commercially, this may be fine. But the immediate casualty is the quality of *Manoharam* and *Thattai* – to mention just a couple of items that I have become disappointed with.

Large-scale production of different items to cater to the requirements of branches appears to have taken a toll of quality.

Dr. S.R. Krishnamurthy

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A grand story

I had the good fortune to know Natarajan, the founder of 'Grand Sweets'.

Not many know his story. He left his native place when his father's business failed and the family owed others a lot of money. He started a canteen for supply of food to Spencer's staff. He slowly built up the business. He rented the house in Gandhinagar for a paltry sum and started making snacks and sweets. He was obsessive about quality and fixed his price higher than others. There was some resistance in the beginning. But when his customers learnt that he never re-used the oil once it was used for frying, his reputation and sales increased. By very carefully using

The dosa attracts further attention

'A case for the dosa' (MM, November 1st) prompted these two responses:

S.R. MADHU (editor1941@gmail.com) writes: South Indians would like this American foodie's enthusiasm for the *masala dosa*, but may squirm at some of the non-vegetarian adaptations she suggests. (Fortunately she confines herself to the pure, virginal version of the *masala dosa* in her recipes.) She remarks – "Use your imagination, and the scrumptious possibilities are endless." He is referring to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* titled 'The Pancake of Possibilities – The dosa, South India's gluten-free crepe, can stand in for bread and take whatever filling you toss its way' by Gail Monaghan. She writes (and we publish excerpts):

"I'm addicted to dosas, the wafer-thin, oversized crepes indigenous to the south of India. Served plain or sprinkled with chopped onions, these versatile pancakes – made from little more than dal (dried peas, beans or lentils), rice and water... appear in combination with a wide range of fillings, the most popular being tomato, herb or cheese, fresh vegetables paired with mint chutney, and – odd as it sounds – Chinese noodles flavoured with Indian spices."

I learned to make dosas and uttapam – a thicker relative of the dosa that commonly incorporates coconut or a mix of onion, green chillies, cilantro (coriander leaves) and tomato into the batter – on a recent trip to Kerala and Tamil Nadu... The distinct, slightly fermented taste of these light pancakes was irresistible from the first bite... Despite being free of sugar, fat, dairy, cholesterol and gluten – and containing fewer than 100 calories – both dosas and uttapam are super-satisfying. Their rice-and-beans foundation also makes them a good source of protein, while fermentation boosts their content of vitamins B and C...

Through the ages, dosas have been partnered with Indian stews such as curries and sambars. However, a piping hot masala dosa – the pancake spread with gar-

licky green herb paste and flavourful potato masala – is my current go-to recipe for myself and company. Divinely crispy on the outside and filled with a meltingly soft potato hash, it gets a boost of flavour from a mix of fresh curry leaves, ginger and chillies...

I've also learned that... dosas are surprisingly tasty when eaten with Western food as a bread substitute – say, as... a wrap. I sometimes drizzle them with very non-traditional maple or boysenberry syrup. Or, for a special treat, roll a dosa around fresh-herbed scrambled eggs, chopped smoked salmon, chives and a bit of sour cream. At lunch, fold a dosa around almost any salad – chicken, potato, seafood, tuna, mixed green or even guacamole. Encasing the warmed remains of a chicken, meat or vegetable stew or stray roasted or grilled vegetables in a freshly made dosa is the most delicious way I know to use up leftovers...

* * *

Dr. A. RAMAN (@csu.edu.au) writes from Australia:

Dosai, that celebrated dish of southern India, more specifically of Madras, is not a native dish of this region. It evolved from pancakes, which the Portuguese introduced into the region. Over time it took the variety and splendour it radiates today, as a culinary charm, throughout the world.

We embellished the idea of pancakes by making it with rice and *ulundu* and gradually eliminated adding egg yolk, which the Europeans did (and continue to do) in making pancakes. We also embellished the tactic of turning over the wrought-iron pan by designing a spatula (*dosai-k-karandi*), whereas the Europeans turned (and continue to turn) the pancakes by spinning it into the air.

Traditionally, we knew only of steam-cooking our food: e.g. *idli*, *sevai*. May be that practice was more healthy than eating oil-based food items.

old and customary habits in his advertisements, he increased the number of his customers and kept his clients not only loyal but also had them singing his praises. His incentive to give one *dhonnai* of some mixed food as *prasadam* was a big hit.

One of the most important things Natarajan narrated to me was that he repaid from the

profits of his business all the money due to persons his father had owed. He returned the loans with interest. He was indeed a noble soul.

After this wonderful man passed away, the desire to increase the business turnover has seen quality suffer. More money may come, but reputation will take a back seat.

Raghavachari Desikan

An old friend of the late owner of 'Grand Sweets and Snacks.'
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Correction

'Freemasons recalled' in *Madras Musings* of October 16th was by T.V. Srinivasan and not K.V. Srinivasan as wrongly stated. We regret the error.

– THE EDITOR

A big 'Thank You' to 27 of you

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Sheet for the passengers, to write.

‘The premier hotel in South India’

Italians, according to Dr. Viola, have been leaving their home country since time immemorial. After the political unification of the Italian peninsula under the Piedmontese in 1861, emigration increased. More than thirty millions, it is believed, left Italy after 1870. This went on till around 1940. The main destinations of the Italian emigration were the Americas and Europe. Most of those who emigrated were peasants or from the working class, who had little or no expectations of improving the quality of their lives in Italy. The migration of the D'Angelis, on the other hand, was a voluntary migration for entrepreneurial reasons.

Giacomo D'Angelis was a middle-class, educated man who belonged to that group of Italian traders and entrepreneurs who settled in India in the second half of the 19th Century in order to earn profit from business there. These included the Falettis, the Monginis, the Bosottos, among others, who contributed to the Italians gaining a reputation in India as confectioners, chefs and hotel managers.

Giacomo Maria D'Angelis was born in Messina (Sicily) in 1844 to a middle-class family. His father, Francesco D'Angelis, owned a bookshop and his mother, Anna Grillo, was a housewife. After high school, he travelled to France in 1864 to train as a confectioner. There is



Esther Jane Wilnel.



• Once, D'Angelis was the best hotel in town. Giacomo D'Angelis himself was known, apart from his confectionery and hospitality businesses, as being the first resident of the city to fly an airplane*. Suddenly, a couple of years ago, out of the blue, a great-grandson of his, Jefferis Donald Evans D'Angelis, got in touch with me from, of all places, Santiago, Chile. We have kept in touch since and he has over time sent me a heap of pictures of both hotel and family a few of which will appear in these pages in this and the next issue. Accompanying them will be a text put together from a paper that Dr. Antonella Viola of the Universidade Nova, Lisbon, Portugal, published – *Migration across Three Continents: The D'Angelis Family* – and which Jefferis D'Angelis sent me, as well as from information my correspondent contributed, and from other published sources.

– THE EDITOR

* D'Angelis, in many ways a Frenchman at heart, was inspired by Bleriot's July 1909 Cross-Channel flight and was determined to introduce Madras to aviation. In March 1910, he piloted a made-in-Madras aeroplane using the Island Grounds as his airstrip. The only dispute is who built that first plane: Addison's or Simpson's? Maruthamuthu Moopanar (a Tanjore landlord) 'shot', using a hand-cranked camera running at a speed of 16 frames/second against today's 24 fps, D'Angelis' pioneering flight – and later screened it in Madras and Tanjore.

a gap in the story then, but next he is reported as arriving in Madras in 1875 with the new Governor, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, on whose staff he is said to have been. Certainly, during all the years he (D'Angelis) spent in Madras, he was very close to Government House.

On October 16, 1880, he married Esther Jane Wilnel, believed to be Irish, in Coonoor; he was 36 and she was 28. She is later always referred to as Wilnel. Was 'Wilnel' in the marriage records a mistake? Her father too is recorded as a Wilnel, Benjamin Wilnel.

(Editor: Perhaps, a regular contributor to this journal, the Rev. Philip Mulley, will have an answer to that.)

The D'Angelis' had six children, five of them born in Madras: 1. Giacomo Wilnel D'Angelis born in Madras (August 1881 – December 1881) and buried in 'Pursewalkam'; 2. Anne Violet (1884 – death unknown); 3. Francesco D'Angelis (1886 – death unknown); 4. Carlo (or Carlos) Umberto D'Angelis (1887-1920); 5. Marianna Elise D'Angelis (1892-1977), who was baptised in Ooty; and Louis D'Angelis who alone was not born in Madras but in Paris in 1889. He died in Santiago, Chile, in 1964, and was Jefferis D'Angelis' grandfather.

When the Duke of Buckingham left Madras in 1880, Giacomo D'Angelis stayed on in the city and opened his confectionery business, the Maison

Francaise, specialising in French and Italian cakes, pastries and chocolates, that year. Thereafter, he considered Madras his home. But he loved to travel and Turin, Italy, was probably a stop – his last one – during a holiday; he died there c. 1934.

Why did Giacomo D'Angelis opt for India, a geographically and culturally distant country, as the place for new business activity? Italian confectioners and chefs had gained a high reputation in British India where they became well known among European settlers and the Indian elite. They belonged to a little-studied migrant minority of traders and entrepreneurs, who sought to take advantage of a new world of commercial and economic opportunities opening up in India after the birth of the Raj. At that time India was perceived, along with other Asian countries like China and Japan, as a new frontier for international business.

Italians in India usually worked in the import-export sector, handling the import of Italian products into India and the export of Indian products to Italy. Some specialised in trading in specific products, such as coral, which was in great demand in India and was the most important product from Italy sold in the Indian market. Others ran small or medium enterprises which were the agencies of mother houses headquartered in Italy. The main goal of these Italians was to seize the opportunities that the Indian market offered, but which were being exploited by Great Britain, Germany and Austria, whose nationals would purchase Italian goods and re-export them to India. In the first half of the 19th Century, British traders re-exported to India from the ports of Leghorn and Genoa large quantities of Italian silk waste, dried fruits, cheese and even olive oil and sulphur as well as of other products. Some of the most traditional Italian products, such as Parmesan cheese and olive oil,



Giacomo D'Angelis (centre) with two visiting travel agents.

were mostly exported to India by non-Italians.

A good portion of the Italian products known and consumed in India was footstuffs and the business of food was for many Italians profitable. Some of them made huge fortunes in India, primarily as caterers and confectioners. Giacomo D'Angelis belonged to this group.

Although in recent years the internationally renowned symbols of Italy and Italian gastronomy and lifestyle have been pasta, especially spaghetti, together with pizza, espresso and cappuccino, in 19th Century British India Italians were mostly associated with confectionery. The initiator of the Italian confectionery tradition in India was Federico Peliti, a manufacturing confectioner who arrived in Calcutta in 1869 as the official caterer of Lord Mayo, the then British Viceroy, and his entourage. When the latter was assassinated, Peliti settled in Calcutta where he set up his own business by launching a confectionery shop in Bentinck Street, not far from Esplanade Row. As the business thrived, Peliti moved to a better location in Esplanade East, where he opened a tea-room in 1881. In 1907, when Peliti's sons had already stepped into their father's business, a restaurant adjacent to the confectionery shop was opened. In the beginning Italian cuisine went hand in hand with French

cuisine, which was at that time better known, and more appreciated among Europeans in India. By the end of the 19th Century, thanks to the activities of Italian confectioners and chefs, pasta (macaroni), salami, preserves, sauces and ice-creams were increasingly appreciated in India, particularly by the Europeans and upper-class Europeanised Indians.

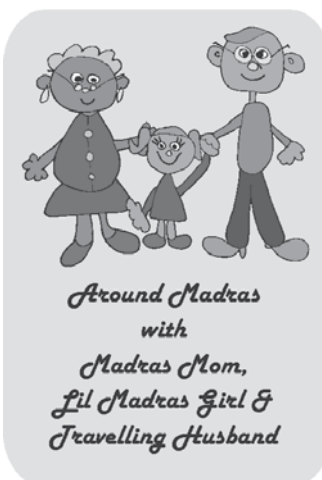
By the end of the 19th Century Italian food was introduced in Bombay, primarily thanks to Felice Cornaglia, a professional caterer. Bombay also had several Italian-owned shops which imported foodstuff and wines from Italy. The Italian Stores, owned by Colonnello R. & Son, had a branch in Calcutta. Marirosi G. & Co. and Bossi G. dealt mainly in wines.

Giacomo D'Angelis was to Madras what Federico Peliti was to Calcutta. Like Peliti, Giacomo D'Angelis soon made a name for himself in Southern India as a restaurateur and general caterer, specialising in French and Italian dishes. His confectionery shop, catering service and restaurant were on the site where Spencer's had its beginning as Durrant's and then Spencer & Durrant's. Here he dreamed of establishing a high-class hotel. He subsequently purchased the site and built his hotel, Hotel D'Angelis, on it. The hotel opened in 1908.

(To be concluded next fortnight)



Hotel D'Angelis soon after it opened in 1908.



Around Madras with Madras Mom, Lil Madras Girl & Travelling Husband

Lil Madras Girl has a ball at the Anna Library



Madras Mom passes the Anna Centenary Library very often and almost always looks at it with admiration. A sleek and stunning building in Kotturpuram, it boasts of state-of-the-art infrastructure, books and facilities that include a dedicated children's library and play area.

Madras Mom had a long overdue visit to the Library. Little Madras Girl had visited the Library with her grandmothers when it was newly opened and was hosting a Japanese Dolls' Exhibition for the children. Both grandmothers had raved about the library.

However, life and LMG's frequent allergies (MM thinks LMG is generally allergic to rain!) came in the way of this visit and Madras Mom's report on it. The duo finally made the much awaited trip recently and what a wonderful experience it was.

Ironically, the visit was made during the week that the Library was in the news with an ominous shutdown in the offing. When MM came across the news, she packed LMG and her diaper bag and ran – to the Library!

Why is it that we take for granted what this city has to offer us and make a run for it only when we think it may no longer be there? Would we be motivated to take our children to Fort St. George or the Egmore Museum only if there was threat to these places as well?

The Anna Centenary Library is a beautiful resource for all families. It is one of those places where an honest taxpayer can look at and feel proud that his/her money has been put to good use.

The entrance has a gleaming statue of Anna flanked by pretty water fountains. The grounds on which the library stands have been beautifully landscaped and car parking is a breeze. The building is clean and spacious and the lifts, escalators and air-conditioners are squeaky clean, new – and they work. MM did observe that the library was constantly being swept and mopped

by a band of dedicated house-keeping staff. All the floors were extremely well-lit with bright white light. It was evident much thought and care in planning had gone into designing the Library and giving it life.

LMG was delighted. She likes fancy-looking places and MM had last seen her get this much excited only at the Delhi airport and the Taj Coromandel lobby. She ran about in delight and demanded that we ride on the escalators more than once. Thankfully, the staff on duty pretended not to notice the mom and daughter duo that simply went

tries in the register before you entered. There was no noise or clutter. No signs of vandalism. No lovers using the library as a secret meeting place. Only book-lovers. No noisy ringtones spoiling the atmosphere with frequent shrills. No walking around the place and passing judgement that this was "Great by Indian standards". It certainly conforms to international standards and is probably the most rewarding library in the country today.

There was even a dedicated staff member stationed by the escalators! Added bonuses are an information desk and a delight-



The Anna Centenary Library

up and down, with LMG pleading 'Doini polama'?

The Library has four floors with dedicated sections for various subjects. What impressed MM the most was a sprawling study hall reserved for those preparing for the Administrative Services. When she tried to enter this facility with LMG, the staff on duty politely informed her that children were not allowed. It warmed MM's heart to see the number of students reading in this section. The shelves were lined with relevant magazines, newspapers and books on General Knowledge. A great gift from the Government to citizens who want to serve the public.

Another striking feature is the large glass panels that enclose the library, allowing you to read in a peaceful atmosphere with a view of a canopy of trees.

Every wing had a staff on duty who requested you to make en-

ful coffee and snack bar. The library also offers wheelchairs and has ramp access, hard to come by in our city.

The children's section is yet another treasure trove. The section has a small outdoor play area with plastic slides and swings for children below 6. Even that small area is beautifully designed, with soft artificial grass and seating areas for adults. The balcony offers a beautiful view of the greenery in Kotturpuram.

The indoor children's section has colourful tables and chairs designed exclusively for children and sturdy leather couches for the adults. There is an artificial tree in the centre with hanging monkeys and birds, a treat for small children. The walls have colourful cartoon characters and child-friendly murals. Again, it was evident to MM that the people behind this effort had put in a lot of thought into the same.

LMG is not old enough to read as yet. However, the library offers children of her age group lovely picture books. There is a solid collection of Indian and imported books for children and MM spent quality time with LMG reading to her from Robert Munsch's famous *I will love you forever*. This imported book retails for more than Rs. 500 and MM was happy to flip through it in the library because the book turned out to be really silly and will probably teach your child poor sentence structure, with the mother in the book constantly telling the child. "I will love you forever and like you for always."

LMG ran about the various shelves collecting books of various shapes and sizes and giving them proudly to MM. She may not be able to read now but when she reaches the age when she can read, imagine her pleasure in walking into a book wonderland and having access to all these wonderful books. Testimony to that were the dozens of older children sitting quietly and reading. All the books in the children section are brand new. Imagine if only the biggest retailers in Chennai opened up their entire children's section to the public and offered every book in there for free. Well, that description sums up the vastness of the children's section in the Anna Centenary Library.

When MM was in high school, our current Chief Minister (who was also CM at that time) graciously agreed to be the Chief Guest for our school's Sports Day. Being an alumna herself, she sat through the entire event and gave us one of the most memorable evenings of our school life. I distinctly remember her speech at the end of that evening. We all waited with bated breath to hear our CM speak and with her ability to hold an audience, we did not miss a word she said. In her crisp and perfect English, she advised us on the benefits of reading. She attributed her knowledge and confidence to the habit of reading and shared the information that she seldom went to sleep at night

(Continued on page 8)

NATURE NOTES

Saying 'Hi' to Pallikaranai's birds

Every time I crossed the Pallikaranai Marsh I wanted to visit it at its best, just to see the migratory birds that flock there every winter. Somehow that never happened. I always crossed the roads in broad daylight or at night. Never at dawn or dusk, when there is a greater possibility of watching birds. Somehow, I never got around to saying 'Hi' to Pallikaranai's birds. I got that chance earlier this year.

During Madras Week, the Madras Naturalists' Society organised a Nature Walk of Pallikaranai Marsh and there I was ready to join it.

It was scheduled on a Sunday morning at six. I was sure there wouldn't be much of a crowd, thanks to the timing and the day. Unwanted, uninterested people just won't wake up at that time, that too on a Sunday. The people who turn up would be genuinely interested people. There is a reason behind this reaction of mine. A friend of mine, who organises temple tours, got frustrated after seeing some guys dressed in sick Tees and Bermudas for a temple tour, eating chips all the way and being absolutely disinterested. They had turned up just because their parents wanted them to! We did better. There were 15 of us, all seriously interested in what the Marsh had to show us.

Being assisted by Vijaya Kumar, Secretary, MNS, and Gnanaskandan and Praveen, members of MNS, was the best way to watch birds, because we got to identify several birds whose names we would not have known otherwise.

As soon as the walk started, I knew there was no point in taking my camera out. The birds were pretty far away and my simple 7MP, 3X cam was not for this shoot. I took a couple of shots of the landscape and kept my cam in, for good.

Gnana and Praveen had brought with them a couple of professional high-end binoculars and photoscopes to make the bird-watching experience much better for us. Gnana had the book *A Pocket Guide to Birds of Indian Subcontinent* by Richard Grimmet, and showed us the pictures in it, and so we knew what to spot where, when they directed us.

The Dabchiks were everywhere. In fact, it looked as though the whole lake was filled with them.

The water was shallow and the Black Winged Stilts were so beautiful, walking with their long slender legs.

The Pelicans ... Pelicans are light boned birds, buoyant and light-weighted in spite of their relatively big bodies. It had just rained the previous night and the wet pelicans were drying themselves on the electric transmission towers and wires. It was an absolutely fabulous sight.

The whole waterbody looked as if it was sprinkled with black spots which were assorted birds of every type.

These were the birds that I spotted there:

Grey Heron; Purple Heron; Common Moorhen; Purple Moorhen; Dabchik; Peasant Tailed Jacquana; Spotted Pelicans; White Breasted Kingfisher; Whistling Duck; Egret; Black Kite; Shikra; Blue Tailed Bee-eater; Coot; Glossy Ibis; Grey Ibis; Spotted Bill Duck; Pied Avocet; Black Winged Stilt. And that's not an exhaustive list, that's all I remember.

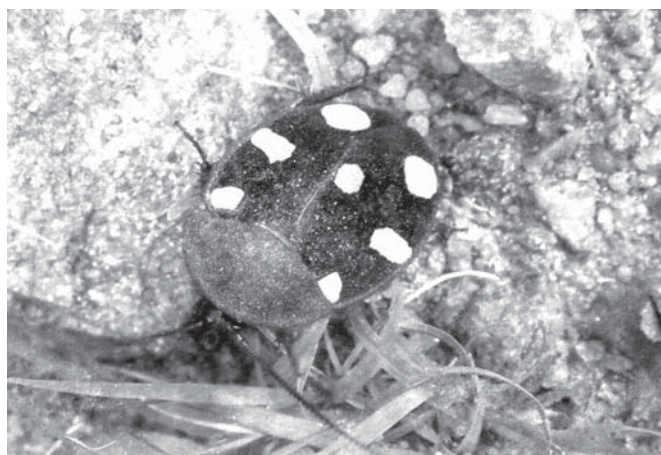
For the record, I did take a few shots of the flora and caught a couple of butterflies too. And became a Life Member of MNS. (Courtesy: MNS Bulletin)

— Bhushavali Mitr Priyamanathozhi

MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. *Madras Musings* is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

THE EDITOR



A roach by another name

If you should take a walk along one of the quieter roads of Besant Nagar, the ones with vegetation-covered grounds and houses with gardens look closely at the ground as you walk. You may find a charming insect, almost round in shape and about the size of a five-rupee coin. It is black, with white spots on it, and if you stop and look around, you are likely to find more of these animated, circular dice about. The creature you have chanced to meet is popularly known as the Seven-spotted Cockroach. It is called so because the number of

this book did not mention the Seven-spotted Cockroach. There was a reference, however, to an insect by its scientific name alone, which I believed was the one of my interest. "*Corydia petiveriana* (Linn.)," said Lefroy, "is a beautiful cockroach of South India, the tegmina having large white spots" – nothing more. This was intriguing. Was *Corydia petiveriana* the scientific name of the insect known to us as the Seven-spotted Cockroach? I suspected so, but, vexingly, there was no illustration to clinch the issue.

• by Kumaran Sathasivam

white spots on the wings of this insect is always seven – four on the left wing and three on the right. It is also found in other parts of Madras, such as Guindy National Park and Tambaram.

It is most readily observed in the months that follow summer, particularly in August. If it has rained in the night and the ground is wet, you have the ideal conditions under which to go Seven-spotted Cockroach hunting. Under such conditions, small groups of these spotted delights come out into the open from leaf litter. They are fairly sedentary, but should you wish to photograph them, you will find them rather tiresome, fidgety subjects – they have a habit of wandering off just when you have everything focussed and are ready to shoot. On the whole, they are one of those creatures that appear to lead quite aimless lives.

To find out more about the Seven-spotted Cockroach, I looked up the trusty *Indian Insect Life* by H. Maxwell-Lefroy and F.M. Howlett. This solid book of 800 pages was published in 1909 and covers our insects as well as a single book can. Apart from its impressive scope, 'Lefroy' is remarkable for its beautiful illustrations, many of them in colour. Surprisingly,

When I found a flattened but readily identifiable Seven-spotted Cockroach on the road, I collected it and put it in an envelope, after wrapping it in protective layers of leaf. I showed it to various people and asked them whether they knew its scientific name, but no one was sure. In the end, the matter was resolved in Bombay at the Bombay Natural History Society. There, Naresh Chaturvedi, who was then the Curator, took a look at my specimen and then brought out a case containing cockroach specimens. Several Seven-spotted Cockroach specimens were pinned there,

labelled *Corydia petiveriana*. So the two names referred to the same insect! Chaturvedi pointed out to me the variations found in the shape and size of the white spots of this cockroach.

Though the term "cockroach" brings you the image of the common household species, it is used to refer to any member of the family Blattidae. Many of these, like the Seven-spotted Cockroach, are free-living and are not found in houses: they may be found among fallen leaves, on the surface of the soil, under stones, in grass and on trees and plants. Cockroaches are all scavengers in the sense that they feed on dead animal and vegetable matter. None of them consumes living plant tissue or attacks other insects for food.

The Seven-spotted Cockroach is an exceptional insect in having a "common" or "English" name. Most insects other than butterflies are familiar only to entomologists, so they have a scientific name alone. This is not surprising, as only the largest and the most prominent of all living things have common names: birds, large mammals, venomous reptiles, fish of commercial importance and so on.

Indeed, the Seven-spotted Cockroach is twice blessed, because it seems to have enjoyed a second common name. In the copy of *Indian Insect Life*, neatly pencilled at the side of the page was the name "Madras Domino Cockroach." I imagine that a reader, perhaps several decades ago, put together scientific and common names as I did, and wrote these words. So *Corydia petiveriana* was once known as the Madras Domino Cockroach. This is so much more imaginative than plain "Seven-spotted Cockroach"!

Take your friends out for a walk and show them *Corydia petiveriana*. When they have admired it, teach them its common name – the one that tells you the name of a city where you can find it!

Postscript: The scientific name of the Madras Domino Cockroach is now *Therea petiveriana*.

OUR ADDRESSES

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: CHENNAI HERITAGE, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 14.

Madras Musings now has its own email ID. Letters to the editor can be sent via email to editor@madrasmusings.com. Those who wish to intimate change of address can also do so provided the subscription number is quoted. For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: Madras Musings, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

On editorial matters: The Editor, Madras Musings, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

An ancient temple in an industrial suburb

Best-known as home to many an industry, Padi, to Chennai's west, is unfortunately not as well known as home to one of the city's oldest temples. This area, originally known as Tiruvalidayil, or Tiruvalidayam, has a medium-sized Siva temple which dates to the 7th Century C.E., as attested by the Tamil Tevaram hymns of boy-saint Tirugnanasambandar, whose association with Mylapore's Kapaliswarar temple is well documented.

There are many architectural, iconographical and epigraphical vestiges in the Padi temple proclaiming it to be a hub of activity in the glorious epoch of the Cholas, starting from the 10th Century C.E. upto the last quarter of the 13th Century. The main sanctum, which enshrines God Siva as Thiruvalliswarar has an apsidal shape with a rounded rear end. These shrines, called *Gajaprishta* in technical parlance, are common in the northern part of Tamil Nadu, with many of them found in Chennai. This peculiar shape of the central sanctum gained popularity during the

Chola era. The inscriptions of this age in the Padi temple, as well as the images found on the walls of this shrine which reveal fine Chola workmanship, give further credence to this dating.

Many epigraphs have been discovered on slabs lying in the courtyard. The most ancient record here, dated 962 C.E., is of Chola times, mentioning an

• by
Chithra Madhavan

important person called Parthivendra Varman, sometimes identified as Aditya Chola II, elder brother of the illustrious Rajaraja Chola I. Parthivendra Varman's inscriptions have been found in many places in and around Chennai and the one in the Padi temple provides interesting details about ancient territorial subdivisions. The etchings register that Tiruvalidayam was in Tudamuni Nadu, a sub-division of Puliur Kottam. However, it is obvious from later inscriptions in the temple that changes

were made regarding these administrative divisions. These records state that Tiruvalidayam was in Ambattur-nadu, a subdivision of Puzhal Kottam (also called Vikrama Chola Valanadu) situated in Jayamkonda Cholamandalam. Neither the exact date nor the exact reason for the change is known.

The temple complex as seen today, like numerous others, is a product of many centuries of evolution, with different parts being added at different periods in history. An epigraph of a chieftain named Vijaya Gandagopala, of the family of Telugu-Chodas, whose headquarters was Kancheepuram, and who had a firm grip over the area of present-day Chennai in the 13th Century, is found here. It records that a female dancer from the Ekamreswara temple in Kancheepuram consecrated the image of the consort of God Siva, called Tiruvidi Nachiyar, in the temple. The gifts she gave the temple are mindblowing! They include a number of jewels and vessels, one being a gold fillet, a gold crescent, a gold

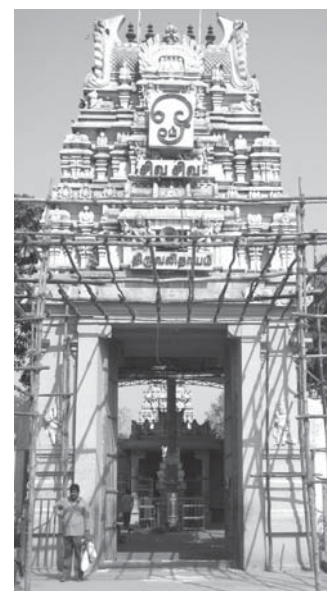
Right: Tiruvalishwara Temple, Padi, Gajaprishta vimanam, and, below the entrance to the temple.



necklace containing eight superior pearls, 528 second class pearls, two gold beads, thirteen long corals, and forty round corals, altogether weighing ten and a half (a standard gold weight), besides a dish, a plate and a cup. The Ganesha shrine in this temple was also added in the Chola times, much after the main shrine came into existence.

The mighty emperors of Vijayanagara who brought the Tamil country under their sway from the 14th Century have also left their imprint in the temple by way of stone records. The earliest of their records is that of the powerful Harihara II, whose officer, Mallappa Udaiyar, was in charge of collecting taxes in the region comprising present-day Chennai.

The temple in Padi, as of now, still has precious inscriptions and sculptures intact which bespeak its hoary antiquity.



This is indeed a blessing, considering the state of many other ancient temples in the city. What the future forebodes for this temple by way of modernisation is, however, a matter of concern.



November: Art Exhibition by A.P. Santhanaraj (at Focus Art Gallery).

November: An exhibition of paintings and drawings by P. Perumal (at DakshinaChitra).

November: Painting Exhibition by Chandramohan and group show of four artists, Mark Rathinaraj, Janarthanan, Suresh Kumar and Narayan (at Apparao Galleries).

November 19: BujazzO – (Bundesjazzorchester): Germany's young jazz elite pay tribute to Indian music and culture. A unique cultural exchange: the first Indian tour by BujazzO, also featuring R.A. Ramamani, T.A.S. Mani, Karthik Mani and Ramesh Shotham from the Karnataka College of Percussion. Conducted by Mike Herting (at Sir Mutha Venkata Subba Rao Hall, Chetpet).

November 20: Photowalk from 6.30 a.m. at First Line Beach, from Dare House to Clive Battery.

From November 20: Karuna Vishwanath and Payal Bhansali from M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women capture the art, culture and beauty of Rajasthan in photographs (at DakshinaChitra).

November 27: Photowalk from 8.30 a.m. Along the Beach-Tambaram Railway line, from Chetpet to Kodambakkam (Details:www.selectiveamnesia.org).

November 29: A lecture by Elisa T. Bertuzzo of Habitat Forum Berlin on aesthetics, architectures and the recollected past of

the city (at Max Mueller Bhavan, 6.30 p.m.).

Till November 30: *Tales from the Rocks:* To coincide with the Heritage Week, DakshinaChitra showcases a photographs exhibition by K.T. Gandhirajan, who has discovered more than 20 rock art sites in Tamil Nadu (at DakshinaChitra).

Till November 30: *Angkor Wat.* Sheraton Park Towers and Prakrit Arts in association with Ishvatham Kolkotta presents an exhibition of paintings inspired by the Angkor Wat Temples, Cambodia (at Park Sheraton, 18th and 19th) and (at Prakrit Arts, 21st - 29th).

Till November 30: *Human Canvas* – An exhibition of drawings, painting and sculptures by M. Raja, S. Govindarajan, S. Arunagiri and 'Village' Mookkaiya (at Gallery Art & Soul).

December 4: The Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra in a joint concert with the Shillong Chamber Choir (at the Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall, Chetpet, 7 p.m.).

December 6: Release of *Christian Themes in Indian Art* by Prof. Dr. Anand Amaladass and Dr. Gudrun Lowner. The book is a pioneering work, showcasing Christian themes in Indian art from the beginnings of Christianity in India till today. Special emphasis is given to artists who as Hindus, Muslims and Parsees have chosen to paint Biblical themes. Philosopher and theologian Anand Amaladass teaches at Satya Nilayam Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy in Chennai, now part of the Loyola (Autonomous) College (at Goethe-Institut Auditorium, 6.30 p.m.).

Constructing illegally

(Continued from page 1)

to seed. Residential streets became parking lots and rubbish tips, arterial roads were choked with traffic, and poor safety norms resulted in fires and stampedes causing loss of life. But with those in power turning a blind eye, business and violation of norms continued merrily.

The Consumer Action Group was the first to take this matter up seriously and bring it to the notice of the High Court. This was when the Government declared a one-time amnesty to the violators, whereby all defaults were to be condoned on payment of a fine. This by itself was questionable, as payment of fine would not set right any kind of wrongdoing, but what was ironic was that the Government repeatedly sought to extend the deadline set for the amnesty. And when the High Court struck down the provision of amnesty, the Government sought to issue an ordinance whereby a status quo would be maintained on all illegal structures. If this was not an instance of Government protecting law-breaking builders, what else can be?

Despite several judgements by the High Court and the Su-

preme Court, all in favour of sealing and demolishing the illegal structures, no action was taken under some pretext or the other. One of the most laughable excuses given by the Government was that the interests of hawkers would be affected. This despite the fact that no judgement ever mentioned hawkers, and violations were all indulged in by big names in business. And when the matter of T'Nagar's congestion was discussed from time to time, the solutions suggested for it took the presence of these illegal buildings for granted and always tried to work around the problem rather than tackle it head-on. An example was the now-aborted plan of building aerial walkways to provide easy access to all the shopping establishments.

Now that some action has been taken, what is ironic is that everyone involved in the constructions is now taking credit for the sealing and demolition. The CMDA, the Corporation, the real estate developers and builders are all claiming that they have always been calling for punitive action against errant property developers. There is also a section of the media which is trying to drum up sympathy for the employees

who claim to have lost their livelihood with the violating premises of the establishments ordered to be sealed. The owners of the affected establishments are seeing a way out of the mess by using such claims as a convenient excuse. This is an instance of taking up the right cause for a wrong reason. The future of some of the employees may be at stake, for which the Labour Department of the State has to intervene and ensure that suitable compensation is paid to those likely to be affected. The shops and outlets cannot be reopened *till such time the illegal developments are put right*. But if the law is followed and the buildings corrected – no doubt losing some space – there is no doubt the majority of employees will have work in them again.

The last chapter in this drama is yet to be written. The commercial establishments are sure to try and find a way out. Meanwhile, nobody appears to have learnt a lesson from T'Nagar. Other parts of the city – Mylapore, Purasawalkam and Adyar – are rapidly commercialising and it appears that no check is being applied in these localities either. Does it require the intervention of the Court in each and every instance?

A writer ahead of his time

Among the outstanding contributors to *Manikkodi*, the one who has been most discussed is C. Viruththachalam, who wrote under the name 'Pudumaippithan'. One of the most famous of the *Manikkodi* writers (his first short story, *Aathankarai Pillaiyar*, appeared in *Manikkodi*), he developed his own style, which even today is considered the forerunner of modern Tamil writing.

In those days, the dialect used in Tamil short stories was based either on Madras or on Tanjore Tamil. It was Pudumaippithan who changed this and introduced Tirunelveli Tamil in writing.

Sundara Ramaswami, a well-known writer, says in his introduction to *Pudumaippithan Kathaigal* (published by Kalachuvadu), "In Pudumaippithan's stories his language, as spoken in his native Tirunelveli district, attracts the reader, breaking the tradition of writing in either Thanjavur Tamil or Chennai Tamil. One reason for this may be that most of his characters are Tirunelveli-based." In fact, Dr. V. Arasu, Department of Contemporary Tamil Literature in the University of Madras, talks about Pudumaippithan's progressive development in the use of the language, from his first story, *Aathankarai Pillaiyar*, to the last one, *Kayittaravu*. According to Arasu, the style reaches its peak in *Thunbakkeni*, a work of total

realism on the life of estate workers in Sri Lanka.

Born on April 25, 1906, Pudumaippithan died in May 1948. Like his contemporary, K.P. Rajagopalan, his life span too was just 42 years! As a revolutionary writer, he was determined to express his thoughts freely in *Manikkodi* as its editor V. Raa was also a radical. Pudumaippithan was highly critical of the accepted conventions and many writers of popular magazines at the time found it difficult to accept him. But he

but point out that, in spite of that, he was one of the best known writers of modern Tamil.

In his biography of Pudumaippithan, T.M.C. Ragunathan, a staunch defender of Pudumaippithan, has identified some stories such as *Samadhi* and *Nondi* as adaptations from Western writing, but concludes that this cannot be termed as plagiarism. In fact, Pudumaippithan in his foreword to his short story *Tamil Paditha Pondaati* (the wife who studied Tamil) says that the story is based on a Maupassant work. He wrote under some other pseudonyms, especially while using some adaptations.

In the biography, *Pudumaippithan kathaigal: sila vimarsanangalum vishamangalum*, Ragunathan says that all the works published under the name of Nandhan are adaptive works rather than original ones.

Some of Pudumaippithan's



Pudumaippithan

Basically a radical thinker, he wrote long articles on political ideas. These works include *Fascist Jatamuni* (based on Mussolini), *Kapchip Durbar* (based on Hitler), *Stalinikku theriyum* (based on Stalin) and *Athikaram Yarukku* (power for whom, based on Communism). In *Fascist Jatamuni*, Pudumaippithan points out that fascism is really nothing but the true and ugly face of capitalism. The same view is expressed in the book on Hitler. Pudumaippithan argues effectively that fascism from the very beginning was opposed to socialism and that Mussolini and Hitler either wiped out communists or imprisoned them.

His short stories appeared not in popular magazines but in some leading literary magazines then, like *Kalaimagal*, *Jothi*, *Sudanthira Chanku*, and *Grama Oozhiyan*. *Oozhiyan* supported modern writing and he worked for it, like K.P. Rajagopalan, for a brief period as a sub-editor.

Invited by T.S. Chockalingam, the Editor, he also worked for a while in *Dinamani*. In his reviews which he wrote for *Dinamani*, he was critical of Kalki (R. Krishnamurthy) and other popular writers.

He ventured into cinema world as a scriptwriter and, in 1945, tried a film production under the banner Parvati-kumari Productions. His efforts to make a film, *Vasanthavalli*, failed. He went to Poona to work on another movie, *Rajamukthi*. While there, he contracted tuberculosis which cost him his life when he returned to Trivandrum.

Writing about Pudumaippithan in his centenary year, S. Viswanathan says (*Frontline*, April 2006), "A natural rebel against social injustice, the tyranny of the religious orthodoxy and irrational beliefs and value systems, Pudumaippithan highlighted in his short stories the plight of the socially and economically deprived. He lent voice to the voiceless, particularly women and Dalits... The sufferings of the people and the absolute penury in which they lived provided the backdrop for the writer to expose social injustice and economic disparities."

Thus we can see that he was ahead of time as Ku.Pa.Raa was. Both also left the world much earlier than normally due!

In 2002, the Government of Tamil Nadu nationalised his works.

An occasional series on Tamil writing from Madras in the 1930s by K.R.A. NARASIAH

was in the company of such great writers as N. Pichamurthi, Chitti Sundararajan, K.P. Rajagopalan and B.S. Ramaiah who recognised his work as out of the ordinary.

A graduate from Tirunelveli Hindu College (1931), he was a well-read man, and translated some Western writing into Tamil. He was fond of the stories of Guy de Maupassant. Having followed his style in some stories, he has even been accused of being a plagiarist by some early critics. Chitti Sundararajan and Sivapada-sundaram in their magnum opus *A Hundred Years of Tamil Short Stories* point out certain passages in his short stories and say that they are actually based on certain Western writings,

short stories reveal a fine sense of humour. In *Kadavulum Kandasami Pillayum*, God has an encounter with one Kandasami Pillai of Madras and discusses earthly matters. In one sequence they both enter a coffee club (as the coffee pubs were once called) and God tasting the coffee is extremely taken up with the aroma and taste. He says after sipping it that he felt as though he had tasted *Soma Bana* itself, and declares, "This is my leelai". Pillai retorts, "No, it is not your leelai but that of the coffeemaker here, who has used chicory!" God reacts, "What is chicory?" Pillai replies, "It is something like coffee but not coffee! It is actually cheating, like some cheat does in the name of God!" A subtle jab!

LMG visits the Library

(Continued from page 5)

without reading a couple of pages from a good book.

Her advice is being followed every day by adults and children alike in this library.

The Anna Centenary Library is a gift we have to pass on to our children.

MM joins hands with all the Anna Centenary Library enthusiasts out there and requests the Government not to destroy this treasure trove. It will never be the same if it is shifted.

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